



. †W'B† '5†—[W'K† ."

One Sunday, a pastor had a special announcement after church.

"We have a guest today who would like to say a few words to you," he told the congregation mysteriously.

All eyes turned to an old man who slowly made his way up to the front of the church with a walker.

"Many years ago," the old man began, "I went sailing with my twelve-year-old son and his friend on the ocean. A terrible storm suddenly came up and the boat capsized. I was able to grab on the overturned boat, but my son and his friend were quickly being dragged away by the current. Within my reach was a life-preserver tied to a rope. I could only throw it to one of the boys and I only had seconds to decide who I would throw it to."

The eyes of the congregation grew wide as they waited to hear what the man decided.

An audible gasp went out from the congregation when he said, "In the end, I threw the life-preserver to my son's friend."

"I loved my son more than life itself and would have gladly given my life for him, but I knew that he believed in Jesus. We had taken him to church since he was little. I knew where he would be if he died."

"But I also knew that his friend's parents never took him to church. I didn't know if he believed in Jesus. I couldn't take the chance. So I threw him the life-preserver."

The pastor went and put his hand on the old man's shoulder. "That is a true story," the pastor said. "I know, because I was his son's friend."

Today's Bible passage is John 3:16. It's one of the most well-known verses in all of the Bible. It contains all of the love in the story you just heard.

God loved you so much, he gave up what was most precious to him. God loved you so much, he sacrificed his one and only Son to save you.

That's how much God loves you. That's what he gave up to save you. Be amazed by his sacrifice to save you. Cling to that life-preserver every day of your life.

Questions to Consider:

- What did God the Father give up for you?
- What did Jesus, God the Son, sacrifice for you?
- Why did the old man from the story throw the life-preserver to his son's friend instead of his son?
- Why does God love you?
- Martin Luther once said that John 3:16 gave him more comfort by saying, "For God so loved the *world*" than if it would have said, "For God so loved *Martin Luther*." What do you think he meant by that?
- Knowing that those who don't believe in Jesus will be condemned to hell, list at least one way in which you can throw a life-preserver to others.

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